

Leadership ...

For centuries, history has been written with the pen strokes of men in leadership positions. Leadership was paramount when the pyramids were constructed and when the Greeks subjugated the known world of ancient times. It was used to build the Roman Empire; it was also used in the building of the new world and the birth of a new nation.

The word leader has been used to describe some of the world's most influential people. They changed the courses of events and earned themselves immortality in the pages of history. People like Charlemagne, Alexander the Great, George Washington and Dwight D. Eisenhower are a few of the world's greatest leaders. None of them were born with the ability to lead.

Leadership is cultivated with careful guidance and a willingness and desire to develop tomorrow's leaders. Since the founding of the U.S. Army in 1775, leadership has been the keystone on which our great military and nation were built and maintained. Being a leader is not an easy task. It takes an enormous amount of time and commitment on the part of the leader to cultivate, mentor and train future leaders.

NCOs. No one knows this more than today's NCOs. They are young men and women responsible for training and mentoring Soldiers to deploy and execute the president's orders around the globe. It is a time-honored and sacred responsibility to defend one's country and those who cannot defend themselves.

The Army provides NCOs tools to build their own personal style of leadership. Its inherent structure provides ready examples of leadership for developing leaders to observe and emulate. Further, the Army has an entire educational system designed to teach leadership to its NCOs—the NCO Educational System. It is up to the individual to use and adapt these tools continually to become a better leader and NCO.

Soldiers learn how to be a leader based on the examples set by their leaders—their NCOs. Whether good or bad examples, young Soldiers learn what works and what doesn't work for them as future NCOs. Once these Soldiers become NCOs, they are scrutinized constantly by their Soldiers and always have to be mindful of the examples they set for their Soldiers.

Young corporals and sergeants will find these are the best ranks to hold because they still have a direct and profound influence on their Soldiers. They are still in the "mud and muck" with them, and this is the most opportune time to set the example. When Soldiers are cold and hungry with their NCO, it builds respect and a bond. When these same Soldiers, fed and warm, realize their NCO provided for their needs before his own, they witness what it is to be an NCO. Accomplish your mission, take care of Soldiers and set the example—that is the essence of what it is to be an NCO.

The NCO's role. It is the NCO's role to ensure future generations of leaders can carry on the traditions and standards their predecessors put in place. NCOs are and will continue to be what their NCOs trained them to be. This is the true measure of NCOs. Their legacy will be the quality of the NCOs who take the torch of leadership and teach the next generation.



Write
your
own
legacy

Knowing this, it is not enough to memorize things like the NCO Creed to get through a promotion board because, without application, the creed is just worthless words that can be spouted on command. Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage are traits of a leader. NCOs do not have the luxury of picking and choosing which leadership trait is appropriate to the situation at hand. If a leader lacks any one of these seven traits, he cannot be an effective leader.

When in charge, be in charge. Know the difference between personal and professional and never let the two mix. Inspect what you expect. Let Soldiers know you are approachable. Make a decision—good or bad; any decision is better than indecision. Application is always better than memorization. Always be aware as an NCO, you are in the spotlight. Do what is right for the right reasons. Enforce discipline and the Army's traditions. Remind Soldiers of what is at stake. Set the example for young impressionable Soldiers to emulate.

It is the mission and duty of all NCOs to ensure Soldiers are trained adequately to carry out any mission—anywhere in the world. NCOs are responsible for writing their portion of history.

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